

**i'll be holding on to
you**

Stenbrough Fics - I

lovelyethereal

i'll be holding on to you by lovelyethereal

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Summary:

"Guys listen. We've known Bill and Stan for a while, right? We all—well, most of us—can see how in love these two are with each other! Someone has to crack eventually, right? So what I am proposing here is that we place a little bet to see just how long it takes them to crack. Who's with me?"

Or, in which the losers place a bet to see how long it takes two of their closest friends to crack and finally admit that they're dying to be together.

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Author's Note:

This is my first time writing for this fandom. I am so sorry if it's out of character sometimes, I tried. (: Any feedback would be greatly appreciated!

The last day of their junior year came with many conclusions. The losers would soon have to start thinking about the more important aspects of their futures like college and finally moving away from the fucked up town they called home.

They had mutually decided that the best way to kick off their summer vacation would be to relax and kick back at the quarry. Their boisterous laughter could be heard from a hundred yards away, but they didn't care. They had been free of the darkness for a little less than two years and they would be damned if they couldn't have a little bit of fun over their summer break.

Mike, Ben, Beverly, Richie, and Eddie sat up on the cliff of the quarry, four of the teens carefully observing the two boys relaxing in the water. Bill threw his head back in laughter as Stan splashed him, the water hitting him square in the face. Smiles graced the faces of the two teens splashing about in the warm water of the quarry. Richie sighed dramatically in the silence on the cliff.

"What?" Ben asked from his place beneath a nearby tree, a book lying flat in his lap.

"It's so sad." Richie said as he leaned against a boulder nestled deep in the soil, Eddie settled next to him with Richie's arm thrown around his shoulders. Bev looks over from her spot where she's sun bathing, catching the glare of the sun in the lenses of her sunglasses.

"What is?"

"They're so in love but they don't even see it." He dramatically places a hand over his heart and observes as Stan turns to start swimming back to the shore, Bill immediately taking this as an opportunity to

dunk the smaller boy underneath the water.

"Yeah. They're practically Romeo and Juliet, Richie." Eddie retorts, turning his head to glare up at Richie who only smiles in return.

"Eds, look at them! You can't fake that kind of chemistry!" They sit in wonder, watching as Stan shoves Bill backward when he resurfaces, making his way toward the shore again. Their joyous laughter can be heard from up on the cliff and a smile is now found on the rest of the loser's faces.

"First, don't call me that, you know I hate it. Second, let's assume you're right. Let them figure it out for themselves." Richie shushed him, placing his free hand over Eddie's mouth. The younger boy wriggled next to him and desperately pried his hand away from his face, screeching about the germs Richie must have on them.

"Sh. Guys listen. We've known Bill and Stan for a while, right? We all—well, most of us—can see how in love these two are with each other! Someone has to crack eventually, right? So what I am proposing here is that we place a little bet to see just how long it takes them to crack. Who's with me?" Richie had shot up onto his feet whilst giving this over dramatic speech, the rest of the losers watching him with an eyebrow raised.

"How is this supposed to help?" Mike inquired from next to Ben beneath the tree.

"Mikey, my man, listen; no one said it was supposed to help. It's a classic bet. We all choose when we think they'll finally give in and whoever's closest wins. Losers pay up five bucks each." He could hear the other two getting closer and he was running out of time. "The clock's a-ticking, people. What'll it be? In or out?"

The rest of the losers all shared a glance, mutually deciding what the hell, might as well see where this goes. The nodding he gets in return causes Richie to triumphantly pump his fist through the air. "Place your bets, losers. I'm gonna go ahead and say... two months."

"One month." Bev said.

"Two weeks from today." Mike.

"By next Friday." Ben.

"Tomorrow!" Eddie exclaimed, caught up in the excitement, four pairs of eyes falling on him. "Damn."

"Alright, and there will be no meddling allowed. May the best loser win!" Richie finished just as Stan and Bill could be seen hiking up the path the reach them again, hair drenched from the salty water of the quarry.

"Wh-what are you guys t-talking about?" Bill asked, shaking his hair out much like a wet dog would, Stan right behind him. Stan let out a shriek, shoving Bill away from him, grinning all the while. Beverly shook her head at her ex-boyfriend and the pair decided to shrug it off.

"So in love." Richie whispered to Eddie, nudging him in the side with his elbow.

"What?" Stan and Bill asked in unison, identical expressions of confusion etched onto their faces.

"What?" Richie shrugged, turning away from them and returning to his place next to Eddie in front of the boulder.

The first of the losers to break the only rule was, no surprise, Eddie. He supposed he was desperate, having estimated the first and only time frame he could think of, so he assumed desperation would be his best friend for the time being. It was Saturday, the day immediately following the placing of the bet, and Eddie was running out of time fast. He could easily envision that tiny hourglass in his mind, slowly but surely, draining itself of the golden traces of sand. Tick tock goes the clock, Eds.

Eddie Kaspbrak was a lot of things; a hypochondriac, a loser, an asthmatic, nervous, but a quitter he was not. Which is why when Stanley offered for him to join him while he went bird watching the

day before, he agreed ecstatically, but he had a plan brewing.

Eddie had showed up on Bill's doorstep at noon the following day, knocking with newfound pride. "HHey, Eddie, wh-what's up?" The stutterer asked, stepping outside and gently closing the door behind him.

"Oh, you know, the sky. Listen I need a favor. Yesterday at the quarry, Stan asked me to go bird watching with him and I agreed but shoot! I forgot I have an appointment today!" Eddie chuckled, sitting on the porch steps and looking back at the taller boy with his chin resting in his hand.

"A-An appointment?" Bill asked in disbelief, Eddie nodded. "What for?"

"Well, you know me, hypochondriac and all. It's something new every day. What do ya say?" He slapped his palms down on his shorts and stood abruptly, turning to face Bill fully, leaning against one of the wooden beams coming down from the roof.

"Yeah, I-I-I can do th-that." Bill's cheek seemed to heat up at the realization of what he's agreed to and Eddie saw it, smirking slightly.

"Thank you, and give my regards to Stanley, please!" Eddie shouted, already running back down the path and toward where he threw his bike on the ground. He waved back at Bill who still stood on his porch, watching the smaller teen pedal away, nearly crashing into a wooden post as he did so.

An hour or so later, Eddie could be spotted crouched behind various trees and bushes, spying on two of his best friends. He rested his chin in the palm of his hand, watching the two so called 'lovebirds' from a distance. He observed the grin that would stretch across Stanley's face as he leaned against a tree trunk, pointing out various winged beauties and describing them to Bill. That was when Eddie saw what Richie had been talking about for himself.

Each time Stan looked away to watch the trees again, Bill's eyes trained on his face. Even at first glance, anyone could tell just how much adoration Bill held for the other teen. A soft smile played at his

lips and each time Stan looked back at him, he would turn away fast enough to snap his own neck, cheeks burning. It was then, when he looked away, that Stan's eyes would glisten in the midday sun, a small smile resting on his face.

Eddie would admit to feeling a little odd about spying on his friends to no one but himself. Although, his only prayer at that moment was that somebody would break the tension between them. Then, he could rub it in the other loser's faces when they met up again, but only if the pair in question were the ones to bring up the news. He wouldn't dare let anyone know he was cheating.

His hopes burn out when he notices Stan and Bill walking in his direction. "Shit." He hissed, standing abruptly and jogging back up the way he had came, hopping on his bike. It's a good thing he already knew what being a loser felt like.

The second of the losers to break the one rule Richie had set in place was Mike. He waited the appropriate amount of time, he thinks, to devise his plan. Delivering meat doesn't offer much in terms of a social life but occasionally, he'll hear certain things that catch his attention. This particular piece of information he had overheard had been about a party on the other side of town. He decided it was the perfect time to set his plan in motion.

"Do I have to go?" Eddie asked, leaning his head on Richie's shoulder as he pouted. Mike smirked from across the room, arms coming up to fold over his chest.

"Yes, we're all going. It's just a party and it's summer, live a lil'." He sat down on the loveseat next to Bill.

"Fine. Who has a party two weeks after school gets out, anyway? And on a Thursday? What kind of world do we live in?"

"Come on, Eds. I think it'll be fun." Richie grinned, leaning down to press his lips against Eddie's cheek. The teen smiled softly and glanced up at Richie.

"Don't call me that, Tozier." Eddie said, tucking his legs under his chin as they sat on the sofa immediately adjacent to the loveseat, Stanley at Richie's other side, rolling his eyes.

"I'm with Trashmouth on this one," Beverly spoke up from her place in front of Ben. "When was the last time any of us were invited to a party?"

"Stan's Bar Mitzvah." Eddie said.

"That was definitely not a party." Richie chuckled, wincing when Stan punched him in the arm.

"You didn't have to go, Richie!" Stan replied defensively as he crossed his arms, huffed and turned away from the pair.

"That's exactly what I mean." Bev pointed out, sighing dramatically. "I'm just saying, I think it might be nice to go out and have a little bit of fun. It's summer, let loose." The group collectively shared glances with each other, coming to a somewhat mutual decision.

"Wh-When do we leave?"

The seven teens arrived at the unfamiliar house later that night, Mike and Beverly practically skipping up the sidewalk from the truck they had arrived in. They had their arms locked, joy in their eyes as they watched the lights that flickered from inside the house. The group had been anticipating this moment ever since Mike had brought it up earlier that day, and some of the antics a few members showed had been mistaken for excitement. All except for Eddie's, he had made his opinion on the get-together known numerous times.

"I still say this is stupid." Eddie said as he walked beside Stanley who he knew had mutual feelings about the situation. "I mean, who knows. Somebody in there could be sick and they could sneeze on me and I'm very prone to that shit, you know? . . . I think maybe I'll stay out here. In the nice, fresh, clean air." The large house was overflowing with people, a vast amount of them gathered outside in

the front and backyards.

The immortal words of Eye of the Tiger flowed out to where Stan had been standing, feet planted on the ground. He assumed he was frozen out of fear and anxiety. This party was his biggest fear come true. He hadn't realized he'd stopped moving until something touched his shoulder.

"A-Are you okay?" Bill asked, smiling sweetly at him and Stan felt his cheeks grow hot.

"Y-Yeah, yeah. I'm okay. I'm fine. Great, even. How are you?" Stan asked, turning his body to face the other teen, pushing a few curls away from his eyes for better vision. Bill's hand fell from his shoulder, sliding down his arm until he reached the other boy's hand, lightly grazing it.

"I'm good." Bill chuckled, a soft smile on his face. Stan smiled back and lowered his head, staring at his shoes. "I-I'm gonna head inside, wanna c-come?" Stan nodded, following the slightly shorter boy up the lawn, shaking his head as if to rid himself of the thoughts swirling in his head.

As Stan and Bill travelled up the span of grass and into the house, the other five standing off to the side, observing the interaction. "I think tonight's the night, fellas." Mike said from his place propped against the side of the house. "Might as well pay up now."

"Not so fast, Micycle." Ben spoke up, pointing an accusing finger at the older teen. "Bet's not over until someone makes a move or they tell us they're together. You haven't won shit yet."

"Yeah, we all have to see it." Richie informed as if it weren't obvious enough at that point, throwing his arm around Eddie's waist and pulling him closer, pressing a lingering kiss to his cheek, jawline, and neck making the smaller boy blush noticeably.

"Get a room, you two." Beverly snickered at the pair and began making her way up the porch steps, squeezing through the crowd of people with Ben at her side.

"She's just jealous she's not as happy as we are, Edward Spaghedward." Richie grinned, moving in to mold their lips together only to have Eddie dodge his lips, arm dropping from his waist.

"You're revolting." Eddie snarked, trying his best to portray annoyance but the smile on his face gave him away. Mike rolled his eyes at the couple, watching Richie follow Eddie around the side of the house, and then making his way into the house to seek out the other four losers.

"Mike!" Beverly shouted to him when he was able to track her down, her voice barely audible over the music. "I was wondering if you were ever going to make it inside! This was your brilliant idea after all!" She said, nudging him with her elbow as she took a swig from the beer she was clutching. Ben came walking through a doorway a few seconds after that, a beer matching Beverly's in his right hand.

"Where'd you get those?" Mike asked and followed Ben's hand as he pointed toward the doorway he had just come from.

"Through the doorway, down the hallway, last room on the left. In the kitchen." He informed the other teen, sending Mike to trek in the direction he carefully laid out. As he made his way down the hallway, the music seemed to grow softer and softer until it was a gentle hush, the beat humming through the floors. An obnoxiously loud 'ha-ha' erupted from the room to his left and he peered in.

Bill had positioned himself on the counter, a hand slapped over his mouth as he tried to suppress the cackle threatening to rip through him. Stan sat at the table, a shit-eating grin covering his face as he rearranged the flowers in the vase. "St-stop, o-oh my God!"

"What?" He asked innocently with a smile, eyes twinkling and stood up, walking toward the fridge. He fidgeted for a moment before deciding to organize the magnets plastered on the surface.

"Don't play so innocent, St-Stanley," Bill remarked, pointing an accusing finger in Stan's direction. "You know wh-what you did." And he did but he was slowly forgetting it by the second, the light buzz clouding his thoughts. Bill slid off the counter, walking toward the table and grabbing another beer out of the cooler that had been set

there.

Stan finished rearranging the alphabetical magnets back in the order that they belonged and turned around, a fond expression on his face as he stood in front of the fridge and watched Bill dig through the ice for a bottle of beer. Mike still leaned against the wall, peering in slightly from the doorway, careful to go unnoticed by two of his closest friends. He felt a bit odd watching his friends from behind a wall, peering into their love life like this, but in his eyes it seemed to be a necessary evil.

"I think they're all o-out over here, are there any i-in the fridge?" Bill turned around, locking eyes with Stanley. Stan lowered his head, gaze dropping down to stare at his feet, the lip between his teeth now his main source of concern as he chewed it nervously.

"I-I don't know." Stan stammered with his feet still planted firmly on the floor. It wasn't until Bill had come to stand in front of him that he finally rose his gaze. Bill was smiling at him now and Stan felt as if he could collapse against the cool metal of the fridge to bring him back to reality. He thought he might be dreaming with the way Bill dropped his gaze down to his lips for a split second. It happened so fast Stan briefly thought he may have imagined it, but then he did it again and seemed to lean closer to him.

Suddenly, Bill's hands are on either side of Stan's face and their lips are being pressed together gently. Stan concludes with this that he is either dreaming or dead because there was absolutely no way that this was real life. Bill's lips are warm in his and just as soft as he'd imagined but Bill had been drinking, the proof lingering on his baby-soft lips and leaving a disturbing taste in Stanley's mouth.

Stan is the one to break the kiss, using his better judgement to decide for the both of them that this was just the alcohol, leaving Bill standing in the middle of the kitchen as he walked from the kitchen to the hallway. Mike had taken it upon himself to move to another room so as to not get caught spying. Given the way the events played out before him just moments ago, he decided that this shouldn't be taken as a victory.

They all come to a mutual decision to leave the party within the

hour.

Beverly decided that the best way to meddle was to not meddle at all, but to tell them straight away to 'cut the shit and work it out'. It was notable that the pair hadn't been seen hanging out since the party two weeks earlier. Whenever one of them entered the room, the other would make an excuse to leave it. 'I just remembered that my dad said he needed to talk to me about something', 'I should probably get home not it my parents will worry', 'I forgot to feed my hamster' or something along those lines.

The new development was beginning to put a strain on their group and Beverly was slowly starting to get annoyed because why couldn't they just act like normal human beings for one minute? Why can't they be civil and stay in the same room or vicinity for longer than three seconds? She finally decided that enough was enough and teamed up with Eddie to set a plan in motion.

"Hey, Stanny." She chirped one afternoon at the quarry while they sat up on the cliff above the water. Neither one of them wanted to swim that day, and after a while the others had come up to join them.

"Hey, Bev." He replied from his place on the boulder that he was sitting atop of. Beverly kept a close eye on the clearing, waiting for a certain stuttering 17 year old to make an appearance. Beverly decided that it would be Eddie's job to convince Bill to come to the quarry with them (on the condition that Stan wouldn't be there, which was an obvious lie), and he felt proud that he was successful in his task.

The unmistakable grinding of Silver's chain as Bill came to a stop brought Beverly away from her thoughts as she smiled at the boy who was hopping off his bike. He wore a bright smile on his face as well as a pair of khaki shorts and the pale blue shirt that Stan had once said brought out his eyes, it was his favorite. The smile on his face had dropped noticeably as he approached his friends, Stan's mouth hanging open as he slid off of the rock.

An awkward silence fell over the seven teenagers immediately, all conversations coming to a halt. As Richie had once remarked: "It's almost like a terrible car crash. It's awful and you know you should look away, but you just can't."

"I should rea—" Stan began just as Beverly threw her hands up and cutting Stan's sentence off even though it was no surprise where it was headed.

"No!" Bev shouted causing the other six teens to jump slightly. "I don't know what the hell is going on between the two of you. You were friends two weeks ago and then you just stop? Shit like this doesn't just happen for no reason, so what is it?" She demanded, her gaze shooting from Bill to Stan, her hands planted firmly on her hips. Bill shoved his hands deep into the pockets, staring down at his feet, glancing up at Stanley. Beverly's patience was beginning to wear thin in the silence that surrounded them.

Stan turned sharp on his heel, gathering the books he had brought along with him. He stood straight up and stared directly in front of him at Bill who now had his bottom lip between his teeth, gnawing on it. "Look, you have been pining after one another for months now and frankly I'm tired of waiting for someone to make the first move. So would you please just cut the shit and figure it out?" Bev asked, exasperated. Stan had his eyes fixed on her, surprised by the sudden burst from the girl and that she and all of his friends knew how he felt about the stuttering boy standing just ten feet in front of him.

Stan regained his composure seconds later, explaining that he needed to leave due to an obligation he had made to his father early on, which Beverly knew was crap but she rolled her eyes and waved him off. Eddie and Richie soon resumed their conversation, smiling awkwardly at each other while they did so since Beverly's outburst had set an awkward tone, the same went for Mike and Ben.

As Stan marched past Bill he felt their shoulders brush together and tried to ignore the fluttering that enveloped his heart, shoving his books back into his bag and zipping the bag closed. He threw the straps over his shoulders and got on his bike, starting to head down the path they had come up. Bill hesitated for a moment before heading back over to his back and following Stanley.

Stan braked hard when they reached a clearing far enough from the rest of the losers, Bill pulling up next to him, getting back off of his bike and he watched Stan do seconds before him, letting his bike fall to the ground next to Stanley's which was propped up on its stand. "What do you want from me?"

"Wh-what do you mean?" Bill asked innocently as Stan paced across the dirt floor of the woods, the white sides of his shoes becoming noticeably caked in the dirt he was mixing beneath his feet, ruining the cleanliness of his outfit.

"Oh, cut the bullshit, Bill! First you kiss me and then it's like you can't stand to be near me!" Stan asked and turned to face Bill fully, fists clenched at his sides. Bill could see the frustration burning behind his eyes, begging to be let free. "Just, help me understand, Bill. What is going on?" Stan was breathing heavily, the heat mixing with the fire that already sparked beneath his bones, his curls beginning to stick to his skin. It's silent for a few moments before Bill speaks again.

"I-I was scared." He begins, digging the toe of his shoe in the dirt, hands shoved back into his pockets as Stanley's eyes burned holes into his head. "You pulled away, I thought I had ruined o-our friendship, I'm still not completely sure that I ha-hav-haven't." Bill said, stumbling slightly over his words. Stan's eyes soften with this confession, taking a small step forward. Bill doesn't seem to notice this new development, though, since his eyes are glued to his feet yet again. "I guess it was just the beer making me think you liked me back."

"You're joking, right?" Stan asks in astonishment. He takes another brave step forward, the tips of his shoes hitting Bill's. "Are you seriously this dense?" Bill lifts his gaze at this, his face suddenly very close to Stanley's. "I'm absolutely crazy about you." Bill is smiling softly at the boy in front of him, the gentleness he displays is causing his heart to soar higher than he's ever know before. Stan has a hand at the base of Bill's neck, his thumb brushing lightly across the cheekbone on the left of Bill's face, gulping visibly as he leaned closer to bring their lips together.

It's a gentle brush of their lips at first and Bill feels his heart stop momentarily, limbs going numb before Stan pulls back slightly and

the movement is enough to send a jolt through Bill's body. He then has both of his hands on either side of Stan's face and he's pulling back in for a proper kiss, lips slotting together perfectly and meshing together as they move backward, Bill's back hitting a tree and Stan swears he's never felt more alive in his seventeen years of living.

Bill's hands are cupping Stan's cheeks while the latter's hand make their way into Bill's hair and he's curving into him slightly and Bill swears he must have died at that moment. A gasp escapes him and he reluctantly pulls away from Stanley, resting their foreheads together. Stan has his eyes shut, brows furrowed slightly and Bill swears it's one of the cutest things he has seen in a while. They stand there, pressed against the harsh bark of the tree for a minute or so before Stan breaks the silence.

"We, uh—we should probably head back, and definitely do that again. Soon." He grins and Bill nods, pressing another quick kiss to his lips.

A month later, the losers are sitting in Bill's living room discussing their mutual hatred of the next school year that was rapidly approaching (well, all except Ben), and the only thing that had changed since before was the development between Stan and Bill. Stan still sits next to Bill only now their hands are linked together and the smiles on their faces are brighter than before.

They'll share the occasional kiss and Richie can be heard gagging from across the room. "I won't lie, I liked it better when you two were miserable and pining. At least then no one had to suffer through watching you eat each other's faces." Richie had also won the bet by default. Beverly lost since the rest of the losers had mutually decided that what she (and Eddie) did was meddling at it's worst.

"L-like it's any b-b-better when you and E-Eddie do it." Bill defended, pulling his boyfriend closer with an arm around his shoulders and pressing lips to his hairline.

"Eddie and I save our face-eating for the bedroom, thank you very

much." Richie explained and Eddie didn't hesitate to punch his arm and scoot away from him, although he did my complain when Richie was wrapping his arms around Eddie's waist and pulling him back into him, peppering kisses down Eddie's neck and causing the smaller boy to squirm. Stan scrunched his nose at the other couple at turned his attention back to Bill. It was obvious the other teen had been staring at him, but he didn't seem to care. He could only smile to himself.

When all was said and done, though, their friends were happy that the two teens no longer had to wait for one another. They were content in living their lives as they were right then.